

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5676

INFO USINT ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

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AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

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TAGS: PFOR, TS

SUBJ: TUNISIAN WELCOME OF SYRIAN-ISRAELI AGREEMENT

1. SUMMARY: TUNISIAN REACTION, BOTH PRESS AND PRIVATE OFFICIAL COMMENTS, HAS BEEN FAVORABLE TOWARD ISRAELI-SYRIAN AGREEMENT AND ROLE SECRETARY KISSINGER PLAYED IN ACHIEVING IT. OFFICIALS CLOSE TO BOURGUIBA HAVE CONVEYED HIS PLEASURE IN ACTIVE ROLE USG DOWNPLAYING IN MIDDLE EAST AND HIS "RELIEF" THAT AGREEMENT CONCLUDED.
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PRESS COMMENT STRESSES THAT THIS ONLY FIRST STEP IN

ACHIEVING LASTING PEACE. LATTER CAN ONLY BE ACHIEVED BY RESOLVING ALL IMPORTANT PALESTINIAN PROBLEMS.

2. NEWS OF GOLAN DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT VERY WARMLY WELCOMED AMONG OUR GOT CONTACTS. BOTH AT PRESIDENCY AND FOREIGN MINISTRY, RANKING OFFICIALS EXPRESSED TO US THEIR DEEP SATISFACTION AND THEIR WARM CONGRATULATIONS TO USG IN GENERAL AND SECRETARY KISSINGER IN PARTICULAR, NOTING ESPECIALLY CONGRATULATORY TELEGRAMS SENT BY PRESIDENT TO PRESIDENT NIXON AND BY FONMIN CHATTI TO SECRETARY (SEE SEPTTEL). CHEDLI KLIBI, CHIEF OF PRESIDENT'S CABINET, IN MENTIONING TO CHARGE PRESIDENT'S REACTION, ADDED THAT PRESIDENT WAS PARTICULARLY PLEASED AT ACTIVE ROLE USG WAS TAKING IN MIDDLE EAST. MOFA CHIEF OF CABINET GHEZAL SAID HE UNDERSTOOD PRESIDENT HAD RECEIVED NEWS WITH "RELIEF" ("SOULAGEMENT"). MOFA CONTACTS TOOK OCCASION TO REMIND EMBOFF THAT TUNISIA CAN SHARE IN USG'S GRATIFICATION IN VIEW OF BOURGUIBA'S LONG-STANDING SUPPORT FOR CONCEPT OF NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT OF ARAB-ISRAEL CONFLICT.

3. LOCAL PRESS MEDIA GIVES PROMINENT COVERAGE TO DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT AND FAVORABLE GOT REACTION TO IT. MESSAGES OF PRESIDENT BORGUIBA TO PRESIDENTS NIXON AND ASSAD ARE FEATURED ON FRONT PAGE. ALL DAILIES, FRENCH AND ARABIC, CARRY UNATTRIBUTED TUNISIAN PRESS SERVICE REPORT ON OFFICIAL "SATISFACTION" IN TUNIS OVER AGREEMENT. SOURCES CLOSE TO MOFA ARE SAID TO ESTIMATE THAT AGREEMENT IS POSITIVE STEP ON PATH TO EVACUATION OF ALL OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES. THESE CIRCLES ADD THAT MORE THAN THIS IS NEEDED FOR JUST AND LASTING PEACE AND RECALL BOURGUIBA'S OFT REPEATED CALL FOR SETTLEMENT BASED ON 1947 UN RESOLUTION. FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM REMAINS OF RE-ESTABLISHING PALESTINIAN PEOPLE IN THEIR NATIONAL RIGHTS. FINAL PARAGRAPH STATES, "PARTICULAR PRAISE WAS GIVEN TO DR. KISSINGER FOR HIS ENDURANCE AND FAITH IN THE DYNAMICS OF PEACE. IT IS RECALLED ON THIS SUBJECT THAT TUNISIA HAS ALWAYS BET ON AMERICAN DIPLOMACY, ESTIMATING THAT WASHINGTON HAS THE POWER TO OVERCOME ISRAELI INTRANSIGENCE."

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4. EDITORIALS IN GOVERNMENT-OWNED LA-PRESS AND PSD DAILY L'ACTION BOTH CONTAIN FULSOME PRAISE FOR KISSINGER ACCOMPLISHMENT. LA PRESS SAID THIS AGREEMENT IS MORE REMARKABLE THAN ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN ACCORD SINCE THANKS TO DETERMINATION OF SECRETARY KISSINGER IT WAS ABLE TO BE CONCLUDED IN A CLIMATE OF TENSION AND IN MIDST OF "ISRAELI PROVOCATIONS" AGAINST LEBANON AND PALESTINIANS.

EDITORIAL GOES ON TO POINT OUT AGREEMENT IS PURELY TECHNICAL AND MILITARY AND IS NOT PEACE SETTLEMENT. IT EMPHASIZES MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM, THAT OF PALESTINIANS, REMAINS TO BE RESOLVED. POSES QUESTION WHETHER ALL INTERESTED PARTIES IN CONFLICT HAVE APPROVED NEW AGREEMENT, MOST OF ALL PALESTINIANS. LA PRESS CONCLUSION IS THAT THIS AGREEMENT AND PROBABLE EARLY AGREEMENT BETWEEN ISRAEL AND JORDAN FOR FIRST TIME BRING ISRAELIS AND PALESTINIANS FACE TO FACE; THERE IS NO MORE WAR TO DELAY EXAMINATION OF CHIEF QUESTION OF PALESTINIAN PEOPLE.

5. EDITORIAL IN L'ACTION IS ALONG SIMILAR LINES WITH EMPHASIS ON 1947 UN RESOLUTION AS ONLY PATH TO GUARANTEE JUST AND LASTING PEACE. CONCLUDES WITH HOPE THAT AT GENEVA TALKS PALESTINIANS WILL TAKE PART AS "INTERESTED PARTIES" SO THAT OUTCOME OF CURRENT PEACE DYNAMIC IS IN FACT JUSTICE.

6. COMMENT: JUDGING FROM COMMENTS WE HAVE HEARD SO FAR, TUNISIANS ARE GENUINELY PLEASED, ALTHOUGH THOSE COMMENTS CARRY CAVEATS THAT THERE STILL MUCH TO DO. REPEATED REFERENCES IN PUBLIC TO RIGHTS OF PALESTINIANS AND TO SUPPORT FOR SYRIA IS OF COURSE STANDARD FARE HERE.
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